

Intro: [\(00:00\)](#)

Having an ADHD brain is a mixed bag. Sometimes it's good news. And sometimes, well, it's not. Even ADHD professionals have trouble with their ADHD. They try harder and harder and harder to overcome the chaos that's ADHD. And finally, they overcome the barriers of ADHD and they become what we call at ADDA, ADHD heroes. And that's what TADD Talks are all about this year. Your favorite ADHD professionals sharing their ADHD stories. So, join us here at ADDA, the Attention Deficit Disorder Association every single day of October, because it's ADHD Awareness Month. Here's the next inspiring story.

Dr. Carolyn Lentzsch-Parcells: [\(00:50\)](#)

Hello and welcome to TADD Talks with ADDA. I'm Dr. Carolyn Lentzsch-Parcells. I'm a board-certified pediatrician with Girls to Women and Young Men's Health and Wellness in Fort Worth, Texas. A large part of my practice is caring for adolescents and young adults with ADHD, but I am also an adult living with ADHD, myself. I'm excited and honored. That ADDA invited me to be with you today. I've spoken many times on medication for the treatment of ADHD, including for ADDA, and has become one of my favorite topics to talk about because I feel like there are still so many misconceptions and so much misinformation about medication for ADHD. But this talk is a little different for me. And to be honest, harder, because it is my story. While I often share pieces of my own story publicly, this part of the story I don't often share.

Dr. Carolyn Lentzsch-Parcells: [\(01:43\)](#)

And like, I'm sure for many of you listening, it hasn't been an easy one. So here it is, my journey, my quest to find the right treatment for my ADHD. It started for me when I was first diagnosed with ADHD combined type and a learning disability around 17 years old. I was a junior in high school and doing well academically at a rigorous school, but it was not without a cost. Anxiety and lack of sleep were constant companions, my sidekicks, if you will. I was offered accommodations including extended time, which I begrudgingly accepted, thank goodness and medication was also part of the discussion of course. I'm lucky that my family was really supportive of medication. To quote my mother, "If you were diabetic, would you not take your insulin?" But I wasn't as sure. I didn't want it. I wasn't convinced that I had a real problem, and I didn't want to use medication as a crutch or my diagnosis as an excuse.

Dr. Carolyn Lentzsch-Parcells: [\(02:52\)](#)

So I refused. I suffered through the rest of high school and college, medical school, residency and into my practice without medication for my ADHD. Suffer might be a bit dramatic, but looking back on it, I think I suffered more than I let myself realize at the time. But I made it through largely with the help of accommodations, including extended time on tests and the incredible support of my family and friends. Now, by the way, extended time without medication meant taking four to eight hours for every college exam, two days for the MCAT®, the medical school entrance exam, and again, four to eight hours for each medical school exam.

Dr. Carolyn Lentzsch-Parcells: [\(03:40\)](#)

I eventually relented and took medication for the depression and anxiety, but still not for ADHD. I did try non-stimulant briefly in medical school, which for me, didn't help at all. To be clear, my issue was never with the idea of using medication to treat ADHD in general or for other people. It was using medication for myself. I was concerned with how I would respond to medication and my own hang-ups with feeling like it was a crutch or a last resort or meant that I couldn't do it on my own, whatever that means. I have never been ashamed of my diagnosis. I've never been ashamed to have ADHD. But I have felt the shame of feeling like I should be able to. I should be able to find my shoes and my keys and my phone. I should be able to get my kids to school on time.

Dr. Carolyn Lentzsch-Parcells: [\(04:40\)](#)

I should be able to read better and faster. There is still, unfortunately, especially for adults, a lot of shame around medication like taking medication is failure. All these ideas about medication that I was and still do teach and preach against were in fact, some of my own barriers. Eventually it was my experiences with my patients more than anything that helped me to realize the difference that medication could truly make. So, then the barrier was no longer not wanting medication, the barrier was being an adult with ADHD who wanted to take medication. It was finding time for the appointment, finding a doctor who would prescribe, remembering to call during office hours to make the appointment for said doctor, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. It was, I think about 2015, by the time I started taking my first stimulant medication, 20 years after I was first diagnosed. I was an established physician treating patients with ADHD and the mother of two children. The first medication I tried, I remember thinking, holy crap, my kitchen's clean and I did it. How did that happen? I was more efficient at work and more effective at home. I thought, is this how other people live? Or are you serious? Are you kidding me right now?

Dr. Carolyn Lentzsch-Parcells: [\(06:15\)](#)

Unfortunately, I was having pretty significant side effects. And over time the medication became less effective, something we call building tolerance. Not everyone builds tolerance to the stimulant medications, but sadly I do. So, over the last six years, I have tried no less than six medications, multiple doses of each. It turns out that I am a slow metabolizer of stimulant medications, which means they last longer for me than most people. I'm very sensitive to low doses and I tend to have side effects. And then of course there is the whole building tolerance thing that I mentioned. So, does that mean I can't take medication for my ADHD? To be honest, I thought it might. It was incredibly frustrating. I felt like I was given a taste of what life could be like, and then it was taken away. I felt that I couldn't do for myself, what I was able to do for my patients. There were multiple times I gave up, I just stopped taking medication. I'd gotten this far. Right. And I have, I have gotten this far, but honestly, I feel like ADHD affects me now even more so than when I was younger. Because it's not just about me anymore. And it's not just my stuff I'm trying to keep track of. It's about my kids, my husband, my patients, my staff, my colleagues.

Dr. Carolyn Lentzsch-Parcells: [\(07:52\)](#)

And it's hard. It's really hard. So how did I overcome this challenge? Have I overcome it might be the better question? The answer is both yes and no. I have not found the perfect medication or combination, but I have found a wonderful physician who was willing to work with me and most importantly, listen to me. Together, we have found a medication that works relatively well for me. And I take another medication with it that helps with some of the side effects. And I'm considering another medication change because there are new formulations and combinations that might work better for me. I've learned, that for me at least, finding the right medication is an ongoing process and that's okay. It's okay that it's not perfect. I have also found, and I'm still finding, the other non-pharmacologic or non-medicine interventions that help me fill the gaps that medicine doesn't. Exercise and ADHD coaching have been particularly helpful for me personally. It has not been an easy or fast journey and medication is not for everyone, but for me it has been worth it.

Dr. Carolyn Lentzsch-Parcells: [\(09:17\)](#)

It helps me to prioritize better, to be more efficient, to start daunting tasks like this talk and finish those same tasks like this talk and have more time and energy for other things. And most importantly, other people like my kids, my husband and myself. No matter where you are in your ADHD journey or in your quest to find the right treatment plan for you, keep going, don't give up. It's okay that it isn't perfect. And it's okay that it will probably change. Please know that it is never failure to advocate for yourself and to ask for what you need. Thank you so much for joining me today for this TADD Talk and letting me share my story about finding the right treatment for my ADHD. I'm Dr.

Carolyn Lentzsch-Parcells. If you would like to learn more about me or my work with folks with ADHD, you can find me online at www.gtw-health.com. You can also see me speak more on medications at the international conference on ADHD being held virtually this November. Information is available on the ADDA website. Thank you again for listening and take care.

Outro: (10:37)

Thanks so much for joining us for TADD talks this year. I'm sure you enjoyed these inspiring stories and there's so much more. In fact, why don't you join us for the 2021 virtual ADHD International Conference November 4th through the 6th. And you might want to consider joining ADDA as well. It's a great investment for a small amount of money as little as \$5 a month. And remember, so when you feel like hope is gone, look inside you and be strong and you'll finally see the truth, that a hero lies in you.